

# **Cooking the Rice Inside the Pot**

*A Historical Call in Our Times*

**By Comrade Mzala**

**(Jabulani Nxumalo)**

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Great political events are unfolding before our eyes. To the overwhelming majority of our people it is already obvious that a great revolution is in the wings in South Africa. Today South Africa is a spectacle of a people utterly resolved and completely devoted to the cause of revolution. The democratic movement that has developed in the heart of our country is a powerful testimony of our people's unwillingness to accept reforms of the system. Our people have long ago discovered that what is needed in South Africa is a new society, a new political and economic system, a radical change of all that is existing.

Lenin remarks somewhere that every political upheaval, if it is not a mere change of cliques, is a social revolution. The revolution that is developing in our country, one that obviously is not going to leave pillars of the racist house standing, is indeed a great social revolution.

We have finished the boycott campaign against the Botha Constitution. The results of the Coloured and Indian elections are already common knowledge to all our people and to the world in general: a massive rejection by the Coloured and Indian peoples to joining the existing political order! The overwhelming majority of the Coloured and Indian nationalities, which are a part of the oppressed nation, remain untarnished by any compromise with the discredited apartheid regime. The oppressed people definitely reject as unworthy of them any petty and ill-fated 'freedom' handed out by the oppressors, they are prepared to forsake immediate petty political 'gains' and reformist handouts in the belief that they are a part of a victorious revolution.

## **Towards a People's Republic**

Writing in the pamphlet, *The Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Socialist Revolution*, Lenin advanced for the Russian revolutionaries the concept of a 'Provisional Revolutionary Government' as an indispensable stage that the liberation movement should reach in the course of the struggle to conquer power.

Lenin, who led the struggle of the Russian people for democracy and freedom from Tsarist autocracy, argued that it was necessary to spread among the people in general, and the working class in particular, a concrete idea of the most probable course of the revolution, and of the necessity, at a certain moment of the revolution, for the appearance of a 'Provisional Revolutionary Government.' In South Africa we are also struggling against racist autocracy and for seizure of power by the people; as a result, the significance of this thesis for the South African democratic revolution cannot be ignored.

The African National Congress differs from the liberal democrats and other reformists by its demand for the immediate overthrow of the racist government and its replacement by a revolutionary people's government. If the unavoidable result of the present political mass movement in South Africa is a revolution, then this implies that the racist State should be overthrown and the old colonial relationships abolished. The passing of State power from the racist minority to the mass of the democratic people will be the principal sign of a revolution in the practical political meaning of the term. At the moment the state power in South Africa is in the hands of the White minority that is backed up by imperialist economic power; the so-called Republic of South Africa is a class State of the bourgeoisie that operates for the purposes of denying us our national right to the wealth of the country, the right to participate in its administration, and to enjoy all human rights that are consistent with any democratic society.

During the process of our liberation struggle for political power, there will gradually emerge new organs of people's power as nuclei of our new State. The principal issue of the revolutionary struggle of the masses in political actions and armed struggle is to seize political power from the enemy, to destroy the previous form of government both in the villages and in towns, and to start creating new organs of self-government. Finally the overthrow of the racial government will result in the formation of the 'Provisional Revolutionary Government' that will be an organ of that political victory. Such a revolutionary government will represent the interests of the people; it will guarantee the fullest measure of political freedom to conduct an election campaign for the convening of the People's Assembly that will draft the new Constitution for South Africa.

In any democratic republic it is absolutely necessary to convene an assembly of people's representatives, elected on the basis of universal and equal suffrage, by secret ballot. The People's Assembly will promulgate laws that will declare all racist laws null and void; it will pass laws that are in conformity with the Freedom Charter. No agreement can be reached with the racist regime to convene such a People's Assembly; no racist government can guarantee the holding of free and fair elections in South Africa, and therefore no peaceful negotiation can lead to the creation of a

democratic State without the racists and the imperialists, and against them. Such a condition requires political and military victory by the organised masses, the only condition that will clear the ground for the implementation of the Freedom Charter.

### **A Mass Movement is Essential for Revolution**

Great social objectives in history have been accomplished by mass movements. Our revolution in South Africa can be victorious only when it mobilises and organises the masses at the grass-roots levels; it can be an invincible force only when it is an offshoot of the embattled workers, rural toilers and other democratic forces. The decisive role of the masses in revolution cannot be substituted by an elite corps of professional revolutionaries. We seek to establish the power of the people and not of the vanguard movement.

During the age of capitalism it is the working class that forms the majority of the masses; all "previous historical movements were movements of minorities, or in the interest of the minorities," the democratic movement that is led by the working class is truly a mass movement. Only a mass movement that is led by the working class will have nothing to secure and to fortify in the present South Africa, since the working class has the objective mission to destroy, not just appearances, but, on the contrary, the essence of oppression; not just its form, but the thing itself, the root of the social evil. As a mass movement that is rooted among the working masses it is no longer a formal organisation but an actual material force, and no amount of banning orders can destroy it, no amount of arrests of its leading persons can weaken it. It is invincible!

How can we develop the current people's upsurge against the Botha regime into an invincible mass movement? Let us mention another condition. It may be said without exaggeration that we are now passing through a period of history when our people, more than ever before, prefer to die fighting in open struggle against this infamous racist system rather than perish from constant starvation, dying prematurely from diseases caused by horrible conditions of poverty. The desperate outbursts of our people point to the imperative necessity for strong organisation and leadership in order to wage a skilled political struggle for victory. It is not enough to call ourselves the vanguard contingent, we must act in such a way that all the other contingents recognise and are obliged to admit that we are not tailing behind semi-spontaneous mass upsurges but are marching in the vanguard. The arena from which alone it is possible to organise the masses and provide real, dynamic and comprehensive leadership, is among the people themselves.

We often meet people who imagine that when we talk of the working people swelling the ranks of our movement we are referring to the exile structures of our

organisation. This is incorrect thinking. Leadership, in the final analysis, means going to the masses, merging with them into an invincible fighting force. History's great call to our movement headed by the African National Congress is to begin a process of de-exiling ourselves, of transferring the initiative of the liberation process to the actual arena of our struggle, inside South Africa. We must fight our way back into our country, we must find ways of dispatching units of our political and military leadership to the various pockets of mass resistance inside South Africa. Yes, let us always remember that while we engage ourselves in building pyramids in Egypt, the main task is still cross the Red Sea back into our own land.

Commenting on the Nkomati Accord between Mozambique and racist South Africa, the Editor of The African Communist put it thus:

*"The ANC leadership outside South Africa like the Communist Party leadership, has never seen itself as permanently in exile. It has always seen itself as a temporary caretaker for the movement which had to be rebuilt, regrouped and re-established at home . . .*

*"Within South Africa today, every aspect of our people's struggle contrasts with the bleak days of 1960. Today there is everywhere widespread readiness for struggle, which flares up repeatedly in a [multitude] of local actions by workers, peasants, squatters, students, householders, professionals and politicians. Everywhere, on a local level, there are respected and trusted local spokesmen and leaders, together with local organisations, who fill the vacuum created by the 1960 setbacks. . .*

*"This is not to claim that every popular resistance to the regime in town and factory is organised by the ANC, far from it. But the ANC presence is everywhere; its influence and reputation upheld and spread by the external leadership, give coherence, unity and confidence to every popular movement. To this extent, the external ANC leadership has fulfilled a large part of its task – the essential part – of sponsoring the spirit of mass resistance among the people, without which there can be no safe basis for a rebuilt organisation. And the SACP has played its full part in all this . . .*

*"And so the external leadership has done what it set out to do – in part at least. It has created the conditions for a return of the organisations and their leadership of South Africa. It has fought a way back, via propaganda and underground organisation and it has fought a way back via foreign training and cross-border return of the forerunners of the people's liberation forces . . . Our organisations have had twenty years hospitality in the Front Line States to make this possible. If the curtailment of facilities*

*in Mozambique is to have any long-term influence on our movement, it will be simply to lend urgency to this process of fighting our way back to the country; and thus to expedite the speed at which an internal revolutionary leadership is once again established – this time securely surrounded by an armed cadre and an aroused and supportive population. The difficulties for us arising from the Nkomati Accord are short-term; the challenges and opportunities are long term.” (No 98, 3rd Quarter 1984)*

The present all-around crisis facing the ruling class in South Africa, the current revolt following the rejection of the latest racist Constitution, in which dozens of our people have been killed by the army and police, this unprecedented situation of ungovernability in South Africa, puts intense pressure on us to meet this long-term challenge and re-establish revolutionary bases and leadership centres of our liberation movement within the borders of South Africa, among our fighting masses. This is a formidable challenge, which requires supreme sacrifice from all of us – anyway, it is no more formidable than our decision to leave our country to seek assistance from other lands . . . we have no choice here, otherwise we will be attempting to cook the rice outside the pot.

### **Arming the Masses and Building a People’s Army**

Che Guevera once remarked that:

*“Guerrilla warfare is not, as is often thought, a small-scale war, a war conducted by a minority grouping against a powerful army. No, guerrilla warfare is war by the entire people against the reigning oppression. The guerrilla movement is their armed vanguard; the guerrilla army comprises all the people of a region or country. That is the reason for its strength and for its eventual victory over whatsoever power tries to crush it; that is, the base and grounding of the guerrilla is the people.” (Granma Havana, December 3rd 1967)*

What are the possibilities of developing a guerrilla war of a mass character at the present moment in South Africa? What are the prospects of arming the masses in corresponding process as the development of our People’s War? This is no longer a theoretical question; the current events throughout the country and in the Vaal Triangle in particular demonstrate in no uncertain terms that the masses have definitely resolved to change the situation by organised violent means. As I am writing I am looking at some statistics of this violent revolt at present taking place in the Transvaal (see The Sunday Express of the 7th October 1984); these figures are part of the first official account of deaths, injuries and damage in the current unrest

throughout the country which was reported to the Transvaal congress of the Nationalist Party by the racist Minister of Police, Louis Le Grange:

### **Buildings Damaged**

Schools	50
Churches	2
Clinics	7
Shops	85
Motor Garages	4
Administrative Board Buildings	17
Beer Halls	26
Bottle Stores	16
Homes (SA Police members)	8
Homes (Private persons)	90
Banks	4
Post Offices	6
Hostels	3
Bus Depots	2
Technikons	1
Boarding Houses	1
Offices	2
Halls	1
Libraries	3

### **Vehicles Damaged**

SA Police vehicles	113
Private vehicles(!)	208
Buses	356
Post Office Vehicles	3
Administrative Board vehicles	20
Municipal vehicles	1

Louis Le Grange told the Transvaal Congress of the Nationalist Party (NP) that the army (SADF) is to play a greater role in combating unrest and violence in the townships, supporting the police force, which is clearly failing to cope with the furious army of angry yet unarmed people in the townships. As it is, indeed more than 7 000 member so the South African army went into Sharpeville and Sebokeng locations recently on a killing and maiming mission, under the guise of searching for

weapons. The casualty toll among our people is soon approaching one hundred dead persons, mostly youth.

### **The Regime is Vulnerable**

Joint operations by the police and army to 'control' internal unrest are not new to South Africa, although they have been rare. Military historians inside South Africa say that in the earlier decades of this century the calling out of troops was a signal that the police had lost control of the situation. Where the army had to be called in it usually meant that the country was close to a state of emergency. Today the use of troops to patrol South Africa's Black townships and to man road blocks may not only be a sign of deepening political crises and panic on the part of the regime but also an indication that the police force has been stretched to its limits. These are interesting revelations to our strategists. If Soweto and the other areas in the Vaal Triangle alone are able to draw into action such a vast sector of the racist forces of suppression, then this is a sign that the regime is even more vulnerable than many people tended to believe thus far.

A revolutionary crisis is maturing in South Africa, and, sooner than many of us expect, it will come to a head and the government will no longer be able to suppress the mass resistance. The masses themselves have realised that the only way out is to wage a war on the regime. The people's combat diary is there for everybody to inspect . . . show me any army anywhere in the world which, despite such odds, and armed with old bottles and dustbin lids, caused the damage enumerated in the above-mentioned statistics! Such is the present mood of the masses. Umkhonto We Sizwe has demonstrated the way forward through an armed propaganda campaign; now, more than ever before, the time has come for both our movement and the masses in general to be placed on a war footing.

As the revolutionary situation is gradually maturing every day, the central problem facing the masses in their daily life is how to fight the enemy and win victory. What policy, what strategy will link us stronger with such a fighting people? It is one that will proceed from the programme of the arming of the masses for a real and decisive victory over the racists in correspondence with the development of our army inside the country; in this way, it will no longer be a war by a few scattered groups, but a planned national war. Our task in this regard is to continue (as we are already doing) to form the nuclei of armed guerrilla units, operating both in the towns and countryside, which should exist not merely to fight to destroy the enemy's military strength, but also to shoulder such important tasks as mobilising the masses, organising them, arming them and helping them to form revolutionary organs of self-government. Unless our liberation army shoulders these tasks, its fighting will lose its meaning and also the reason for its existence. Proceeding from

this approach, the guerrilla operations will be in harmony with the daily struggles of the people as well as with their aspirations. At the grass-roots level, armed struggle must be de-mystified, workers and peasants should be capable of imagining that they themselves are capable of carrying out combat operations.

## **The Spanish Experience**

Late in 1948 the revolutionaries in Spain decided to abandon guerrilla warfare, and all commanders in the field were instructed that guerrilla units should be disbanded. The war was just not winning victory!

Writing almost in lament, General Lister, who was one of the commanders in the military campaigns that were led by the Communist Party of Spain, says that:

*“It was painful to have to discontinue the guerrilla movement in which so many men and women had fought with supreme courage.”*

What had gone wrong in Spain? Why couldn't the guerrilla war succeed? General Lister has this profound lesson to share with us:

*“In organising a guerrilla movement one should never confuse popular sympathy with popular support; these are two different things. In Spain the guerrillas enjoyed the sympathy of people, who regarded them as heroes. But the sympathy did not go beyond that. It never became the active and massive support for the guerrilla operations which was essential, and on which the guerrillas had counted.”*

The Spanish experience teaches us that an organisation which is thinking in terms of initiating a guerrilla war should know that a guerrilla movement must proceed from the concept of peoples' support; a guerrilla war can grow into a mass movement provided the people are organised, armed to part in it, using the forms of combat suggested by the actual situation and objective conditions in the country including armed insurrection as an art.

## **Mandela Said It**

Waging People's War of a guerrilla type within a highly industrialised capitalist state, one which has not only mobilised and armed a vast colonial community but, in addition, is supported by almost all the major imperialist countries financially and (though covertly) militarily, is an extremely difficult venture, it cannot be denied. Sustaining guerrilla operations inside the country without safe supply lines (which

almost all countries that waged guerrilla wars had, with Cuba as a notable exception) makes our war even more hazardous.

Those who rely on these similar arguments to dismiss the possibility of our victory over the Pretoria regime, forget or underestimate the most important factor which will make our revolutionary war of liberation victorious, that is, the organised character and proper leadership of our armed people. Future historians, who will judge our situation with the benefit of hindsight, having the advantage of the so-called 'bird's-eye view' will indeed say that we won our victory because we truly fought a people's war.

One racist general is reported by the The Star of 27th January 1973 to have confessed:

*"The objective for both sides in a revolutionary war is the population itself . . . military tactics and hardware are all well and good, but they are really quite useless if the government has lost the confidence of the people among whom it is fighting. And by the time their confidence has been lost, more armed force will cause the population to become more antagonistic."*

Even here in the military field of organisation, our task is to provide on-the-spot military leadership to the people's combat efforts. The task is to contextualise Shaka's strategy of 'shortening the spears' to fight a sustained people's war for victory.

Said Nelson Mandela:

*"Between the anvil of united mass action and the hammer of armed struggle we shall crush apartheid and White minority racist rule."*

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**Course: African Revolutionary Writing**

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